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## ABSTRACT

This report is an evaluation of where Hispanic American women rank in the areas of education, employment, compensation, health, and politics. For Hispanics, both men and women, education is vitally important, and this importance is underscored by data that show that Hispanics overall lack the ability to cope economically. High dropout rates and low college graduation rates characterize the Hispanic American population. Latinas are at additional risk because of sex discrimination in access to quality education. This report explores the challenges facing Latinas in the context of the National Education Goals of 1990. Employment patterns of Latinas show that they have traditionally been employed in female-dominated occupations that are among the lowest paid. Despite increases in their employment, they remain at the bottom rungs of the labor force. They do not receive equal pay, as is typical of occupations dominated by other women or people of color. Hispanic American women also have health problems that do not receive the attention they deserve. The report points to the need for restructured schools that have the capacity to meet the educational needs of Latinas while preparing them for the workplace of the future, affordable health care sensitive to a population that speaks two languages, and equitable compensation systems. The importance of political empowerment to move toward these goals is also highlighted. (Contains 6 tables and 207 endnotes.) (SLD)

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# In Search Of Economic Equity



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MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

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The Mexican American Women's National Association (MANA) was founded in 1974 in Washington, D.C. to promote the social, educational, and economic advancement of Hispanic women.

"In Search of Economic Equity" was developed with a grant from the Ford Foundation. The report will serve as the centerpiece for MANA training and leadership development for Hispanic women and as a tool for advancing public policy focusing on Latinas.

MANA is the nation's largest national Hispanic women's volunteer membership organization with members in 36 states and chapters in California, Colorado, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington State and Washington, D.C.

MANA serves as a "voice" for Hispanic women in social policy and planning areas from the local level to the nation's capital.

MANA carries out its national goals through advocacy, leadership development, a stay-in-school program for Hispanic teenage females, a scholarship program, and programs that recognize the achievement of Hispanic women. MANA chapters engage in a wide range of activities including cancer screening clinics that have literally saved the lives of Hispanic women, mentoring programs for Latina teenagers, leadership and skills development programs for community women, voter education and registration projects, and scholarship programs that benefit college bound Hispanas.

Mexican American Women's National Association

## In Search Of Economic Equity



Prepared by

Patricia Rodriguez  
and

Elvira Valenzuela Crocker



*Mexican American  
Women's National  
Association*

Dear Friend:

"In Search of Economic Equity" is an evaluation of where Latinas rank in the areas of education, employment, compensation, health and politics.

The report was developed by MANA, the National Hispanic Women's Organization, under a grant from the Ford Foundation.

What it reveals is that Latinas are lacking in all areas and what it so dramatically points out is a need for our country's leaders to begin to replace rhetoric with action on a realistic social and family policy that provides opportunities for Hispanics, as well as Americans, to work, to earn a decent wage, and to provide the basic needs for their families.

The report speaks to the need for restructured schools that have the capacity to meet the educational needs of Hispanics while preparing them adequately for the workplace of the future, affordable health care that is sensitive to a population that functions in two languages, English and Spanish, and equitable compensation systems that penalize neither females nor males. The report also addresses the importance of political empowerment to achieve Hispanic policy goals.

Ultimately, the emphasis is on education. It is on this foundation that economic equity will be built.

This analysis will be shared with U.S. policymakers at all levels of government. It will be used as a training document for our members as well as for other Latinas across the country. Finally, the report will be utilized by MANA as an important backgrounder in the advancement of policy for this country's Latinas.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Judy Canales", followed by a horizontal line.

Judy Canales  
President

# HISPANAS AND EDUCATION



Education has historically served as the pathway to the American Dream. It has been the critical element for job success, economic prosperity and full participation in the democratic processes of this nation.

For Latinas, as for other women, educational attainment is the key to their quality of life and an important predictor in how their children will do. "The cause and effect relationship between a mother's education and that of her children has long been assumed. The ILAR (Intergenerational Literacy Action Research) project now shows, without a doubt, that a mother's education can and does have a substantial impact on the educational achievements of her children," says Dr. Thomas Sticht of Applied Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences, Inc. and the chief consultant to the project.<sup>1</sup> Higher levels of education among mothers play an important role in reducing poverty among children.<sup>2</sup>

How Hispanas and their children do educationally has tremendous implications for the future of the United States.

The Committee on Economic Development states: "This nation cannot continue to compete and prosper in the global arena when more than one-fifth of our children live in poverty, and a third grow up in ignorance. And if this nation cannot compete, it cannot lead. If we continue to squander the talents of millions of our children, America will become a nation of limited human potential. It would be tragic if we allow this to happen. America must become a land of opportunity -- for every child."<sup>3</sup>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics data on work force growth by race and sex from 1990 to 2005 indicates that Hispanic females are the fastest growing segment of this country's

workers, followed by Asian females and Hispanic males. That factor makes education not just a Hispanic concern. It makes it a matter in the national interest.<sup>4</sup>

In the industrial era, it was possible to get a job without a high school diploma because of the rote nature of factory jobs. In an information society, there is a greater need for educated workers -- those who can think critically, work cooperatively, and make decisions. As predictions underscore, only 14% of all jobs will be suitable for people with less than a high school education by the year 2000. The median years of education required by new jobs created between now and then will increase from 12.8% to 13.5%, challenging the current educational attainment of Hispanics.<sup>5</sup>

## Girls Treated Differently

Yet "Girls are systematically discouraged from courses of study essential to their future employability and economic well-being," and they are "being discouraged from the very courses required for their productive participation in the future of America, and we as a nation are losing more than one-half of our human potential,"<sup>6</sup> warns the American Association of University Women.

This inequality translates in many ways -- among them, girls get less attention from teachers, and textbooks ignore the contributions and experiences of women. For girls from low-income families and minorities, there are other severe obstacles. Socioeconomic status, more than any other factor, affects access to school resources and educational outcomes, says the AAUW report. Girls' test scores are lower than

those of boys. Among the other barriers are poor schools in dangerous neighborhoods, low teacher expectations, inadequate health care and nutrition.<sup>7</sup>

Also a barrier to the academic success of girls is low self-esteem. In 1991 AAUW reported that girls and boys start out on an equal footing in elementary school, but girls' self-esteem declines much more significantly. They end up much less confident about their abilities, are less likely to value their talents, and less likely to think they can get things done, according to the AAUW report.

Hispanic girls are much less confident and positive than other girls and go through a "self-perception crisis in some ways even more dramatic than that experienced by White girls," says the report. They end up with slightly higher self-esteem than White girls, but dramatically drop in terms of confidence in family relationships, school talents, and self importance. Says AAUW: "The number of Hispanic girls who strongly agree with the statement 'I am happy the way I am' drops 38 points, from 68 percent in elementary school to 30 percent in high school."<sup>8</sup>

Females who have low self-esteem, who don't value their own talents, who are not treated equally in the educational setting, and who are subjects of little or no expectations by society or their teachers aren't likely to succeed educationally.

Just how badly the U.S. is missing the boat on women is clear from a recent study by Clifford Adelman, U.S. Department of Education. There is telling evidence that women are critical, underutilized resources in the economy, he finds. Women consistently have superior academic performance, starting with high school. "No matter how one slices the high school class of 1972," says Adelman, "whether one looks only at Blacks or Whites or Blacks or Hispanics, or at high or low socioeconomic backgrounds, women's average class rank exceeds that of men." They also excelled in college; they were more likely to win scholarships and to earn degrees rapidly.<sup>9</sup>

Their average grades were higher, though they tended to major in different fields than men. More women than men continued their educations after age 30, many of them moving into such fields as accounting and computer science.

But, says Adelman, their superior educational status was not rewarded in the labor market. They experienced more unemployment than men, even if they were childless, and by their early 30s they were able to achieve pay equity with men in only 7 of 33 major occupations and in five others if they had earned more than eight credits in college-level mathematics.

He concludes: "U.S. women, of all races, are the best educated and trained in the world."<sup>10</sup> The challenge, he says, is to utilize women's enthusiasm and education productively and to reward them equitably. If we can do that, America's standard of living can continue to grow.

## Quality Education Not Available

"Quality education is still not available to most minority students; nor is it uniformly available to all nonminority students...But for minority students, our educational system is not merely inadequate; it is, all too often, openly hostile and damaging...This nation must make fundamental and systemic changes in its educational enterprises"<sup>11</sup> to achieve higher levels of performance and educational equity.

"Thus, while it is minority children who are disproportionately receiving failing grades in school, it is the educational system which has failed. The financing, organization, and management of our schools are major factors explaining why America does not provide a quality education for all. If we are to achieve higher levels of performance and educational equity, the nation must make fundamental and systemic changes in its educational enterprise....No subject is more important to providing

quality education for minorities than the restructuring of schools."<sup>12</sup>

For Hispanics -- female and male -- education is particularly critical in an era of high technology and an increasingly global marketplace. It is an important family issue. And its importance is underscored by the figures that reflect the Hispanic capacity to cope economically. That record is wanting.

In 1989, more than one in three Latino children were poor. They are now nearly three times as likely as non-Latino children to live in poverty. Latino female-headed families face extremely high poverty rates, owing to the fact that women generally earn less than men and child support by absent fathers too often is small and unreliable.<sup>13</sup>

The link between nutrition and learning also is too important to overlook. Children who arrive at school hungry are not ready to learn. Yet the Food Research and Action Center documents that the federally funded School Breakfast Program is still being "woefully" underused. Less than half the schools offering lunch also offer breakfast, even though eligibility requirements are the same.<sup>14</sup>

To get to the child, however, one must get to the mother.

## High Dropout Rates

The challenge is great. According to the National Council of La Raza, Hispanics remain the most undereducated major segment of the U.S. population.<sup>15</sup> Hispanic students continue to have the highest dropout rate of any group and the lowest rates of high school completion and graduation. In 1991, only 51.3% of Hispanics 25 and over had four years of high school or more. The dropout rate for Hispanics was placed at 37.7% (1989) for those between the ages of 18-24. The comparable rate for Blacks was 16.4% and for Whites 14.1%.

Only 44% of Mexican Americans; 58% of Puerto Ricans; 61% of Cubans; 60% of Central and South Americans; and 71% of other Hispanics had completed four years of high school or more.<sup>16</sup>

More than two-thirds of poor Latino family heads do not have a high school diploma. More than one-third of Latino families with children are headed by a high school dropout; only a fifth are headed by a high school graduate.<sup>17</sup>

## Low College Graduation Rates

Those rates help explain the low Hispanic college graduation rates. Less than one in 10 Latinos graduates from college. Among non-Hispanics, the rate is more than double at 22.3% for those 25 and older. More Puerto Ricans (10.1%), Cubans (18.5%), Central and South Americans (15.1%) and other Hispanics (16.2%) graduate from college than do Mexican Americans (6.2%).<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, almost eight times as many Hispanic adults (12.5%) as non-Hispanic adults were labeled illiterate in 1991 by the traditional measure of literacy -- completion of less than five years of schooling. Mexican Americans had the highest level of illiteracy at 15% than did other Hispanic groups, whose rates ranged from 7.7% to 8.9%. Studies on functional literacy based on tests of reading, writing and math skills have found even higher rates of illiteracy among Hispanics.<sup>19</sup>

High dropout rates and low educational attainment translate dramatically. In 1990, the median annual earnings of Hispanic women were \$10,099, 21% less than those of non-Hispanic women. Hispanic households headed by females had a 1990 median income of \$11,914. Two-parent Hispanic families averaged \$23,431 and married couples, \$27,996. It is also important to note that the median income of Hispanic families declined by 5.2% in 1990.<sup>20</sup>

Eight months into the latest recession, the unemployment rate of Hispanics 16 years and older was higher, at 10%, than that of non-Hispanics at 6.9%. About 9.2% of Hispanic females were unemployed in March 1991, compared to 5.9% for non-Hispanic females.<sup>21</sup> In tough economic times, all individuals need an edge to get and retain employment. Hispanics do not possess that advantage.

The Hispanic educational challenge is a U.S. challenge -- namely because the Hispanic population is growing at a rate five times the non-Hispanic population. It is the youngest segment of the population. In 1988, 10.5% of the nation's students in public schools were Hispanics, and those figures are expected to grow by an additional 2.4 million by the year 2000.<sup>22</sup>

## Ongoing Policy Concern

Education, then, will continue to be an ongoing issue of paramount concern to Hispanics. While Hispanic policy concerns have tended to focus on the issues of bilingual education, student financial aid, school finance and equity, the focus of Hispanics will, of necessity, broaden to cover the entire educational landscape -- from the schools Latino children will attend and the structure and organization of those institutions, to what they learn there, who will teach them, and who will make policy.

A reflection of what those policy concerns will be is found in an '80s survey of Hispanic officials. Those surveyed were critical of the schools for not providing sufficient, appropriate services to Hispanic children on such serious matters as teenage pregnancy, drug problems, learning disabilities and poverty. Their responses to the survey point to their belief that parental involvement and encouragement are must factors for student success. They also see bilingual education as a help factor in school success and important in achieving success in the work place.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly a hindrance for Hispanic students are the current budget woes being felt by school districts across the country. Many of those severe money problems are having disastrous effects on urban and inner city schools. And it is there that Hispanic students are heavily concentrated -- Los Angeles being but one example of those cities plagued by drastic cuts in resources. Over 90% of Hispanic students attend schools in urban centers,<sup>24</sup> areas that suffer from a limited tax base and that are also buffeted by crime, drugs, poverty and decaying infrastructures.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census raises yet another important contemporary issue. There are significant racial and socioeconomic differences in student computer usage in the schools. In grades 1-8, 50% of White students use computers, compared with 40% of Hispanic students. In the higher grades, the percentages go down for all students but fall to 33.6% for Hispanics -- lower than for Whites and Blacks. Home computer usage for Hispanics also was lower than for other students.<sup>25</sup> In an information era in which the computer is the chief icon, this puts Hispanic students at a disadvantage when they move from school to the work place.

## Challenges to Completion

A major challenge is getting Hispanics into schools and keeping them there through completion. A factor in generating those high dropout rates is that Hispanics experience greater rates of enrollment below grade level than do Whites or Blacks. By the time they reach the age of 13, Hispanic students are enrolled below grade level more than any other group. While females do slightly better than males, they are still enrolled below grade level at discouraging rates. Students fall behind for a variety of reasons -- high absence rates, illness, frequency of moves, poor academic achievement in critical areas such as reading and other basic skills, failing several subject areas and other reasons such as employment. For some, it may be limited English

proficiency. Whatever the reasons, these students are at greater risk of dropping out.<sup>26</sup>

Research indicates that dropouts are "disproportionately from low SES (social economic status) families and racial/ethnic minority groups." Dropouts also come from homes with a weaker educational support system. They are less likely to have both natural parents living at home; have mothers with lower levels of formal education; mothers with lower educational expectations for their offspring; mothers more likely to be working; and, parents less likely to be interested in or to monitor both in-school and out-of-school activities.<sup>27</sup>

School suspension also is a problem. For example, the Hispanic suspension rate in California jumped 36% between 1980 (60,743) and 1986 (82,393). In Texas, the rate jumped from 29% to 37%. In that state, Hispanics comprise a third of the school enrollments. If students aren't in school, they are deprived of classroom instruction and can't keep up with their classmates. That also puts them at risk of leaving school before graduation.<sup>28</sup>

As the number of Hispanics students with limited English proficiency rises, the availability of bilingual education services has declined. The number of limited-English-proficient students grew two and a half times as rapidly as school enrollment during the '80s.<sup>29</sup> That's a trend that is anticipated to continue. In recent years, only two states -- Arizona and California -- increased bilingual services. They did so only slightly. At a time when the nation focuses on economic competitiveness globally, U.S. policymakers have yet to translate the natural foreign-language ability of some of its youth into a national resource.

How well do students who stay in school perform? It's a question that has plagued schools in general as there are few reliable measures of student progress in existence, and those

that do exist are under national scrutiny as to their relevance. New approaches are being explored. The challenge will be to make them gender and culturally sensitive.

If schools are to be graded by the national goals adopted in the early '90s by U.S. governors and President George Bush, they are worth grading in their response to Hispanic educational needs. A review of those goals and progress toward them flash a strong message of need and a grade of "failing" or "incomplete."

- **Goal One: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.** Funding for Head Start and programs that would enable children to arrive at school ready to learn has suffered under the Reagan and Bush Administrations. There are 137,000 Latinos served by Head Start -- 22% of those served.<sup>30</sup> The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching says that 35% of 7,000 kindergarten teachers surveyed reported that their students arrived at their classrooms unprepared for school. Moreover, the report says, half a million children are malnourished and 1.5 million children under six aren't covered by health insurance. In states with high percentages of Hispanics, the figures were generally higher than that.<sup>31</sup> In 1990, 30.7% of Hispanic three- and four-year-olds were in pre-school -- a much lower rate than for White children (47.2%) and Blacks (41.8%).<sup>32</sup>
- **Goal Two: By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.** For Hispanics, whose dropout rates are the highest, this goal remains elusive.
- **Goal Three: By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, math, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.** National surveys indicate U.S. students have a way to go in all categories. For Hispanics, retention is the greater

challenge. They can't be reached if they're not in school. The answer may be in making school more relevant, attractive and sensitive to the needs of Hispanic students.

- **Goal Four: By the year 2000, students will be first in the world in science and math achievement.** A 1992 survey of 13-year-olds by the Educational Testing Service indicates that U.S. students scored lower in science than did students in several other countries including South Korea, Taiwan, Switzerland, the former Soviet Union, Hungary, France, Italy, Israel, Canada, Scotland, Slovenia and Spain. Students in Ireland and Jordan scored lower than U.S. students. Japan and Germany did not participate in the survey. Math results were similar for the teenagers. However, the top 10% of U.S. students compared favorably with the top students from other countries in both areas.<sup>33</sup> "Although Hispanic and Black students at all three age levels (9, 13, 17) showed more improvement throughout the years in their mathematics and science proficiency, the gains were not large enough to close the performance gap between them and their White counterparts."<sup>34</sup>

That Hispanic students can and do succeed in these fields is dramatically portrayed in the movie, "Stand and Deliver." Its message: There are no math or science genes. Hard work and ambition do pay off. U.S. astronauts Ellen Ochoa and Franklin Chang-Díaz are also proof of the Hispanic potential in these fields.

- **Goal Five: By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.** Given the growing size of the population and its high illiteracy rates, Hispanics and their future generations are at great risk. More resources, less lip service, must be provided to achieve this goal. Innovative approaches to reaching and teaching Latino adults how to read and write are a must.
- **Goal Six: By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a**

**disciplined environment conducive to learning.** The infrastructure of schools is deteriorating across the country. Educational resources are diminishing as school budgets get slashed across the country. Minority students Hispanics among them, often attend neighborhood schools that are structurally unsound and unsafe. In recent years, crime in the community has spread into the school house and school yard. Racial/ethnic violence is on the upswing. Drugs are a problem. Sexual harassment is on the rise. These are not the makings of a "disciplined environment" for learning. A strong community involvement in the schools is a must if these trends are to be reversed. And where there are Latina students there must be Latino parents who are involved in the education of their young -- as supporters, as mentors, as volunteers, as resources, as policymakers.

As President George Bush moved to become the country's "Education President," his administration developed a Hispanic Education Agenda. Its impact has yet to be felt.

An issue raised throughout the '80s and into the early '90s was the issue of who operates the schools. At a time when minority school enrollments are rapidly climbing and forecasts call for even greater numbers, who is teaching the students and who is running the schools becomes of greater import.

Gary Orfield, a professor at Harvard University Graduate School of Education, says his studies indicate that Hispanics are far more likely than Blacks to attend segregated schools. This should be no surprise, given the segregated housing patterns that exist in most cities.<sup>35</sup>

School personnel play a very important role in informing students about educational opportunities and motivating them to pursue education endeavors. Thus, Hispanic teachers and other school leaders are important role models. Among school administrators in 40 states, the number of those who were either Hispanic females or males is minuscule. Of the nation's almost three million public and

private school teachers, only 2.9% were Hispanic (1987-88) -- not at all a reflection of 10.5% who are Hispanic students. And if one views the Hispanic teacher to Hispanic student ratio, the figures are even more glaring at 1 to 64 compared to the 1 to 17 ratio of non-Hispanic students to teachers.<sup>36</sup>

The Hispanic teachers who are there are predominantly female and young, with less experience than others. They tend to teach at the elementary grades. They're less likely to hold degrees above the B.A.; about a third hold master's degrees. Perhaps a carryover from the notion that they have to be twice as good as anyone else to make it, Hispanic teachers who hold special advanced education degrees and doctorates in the public schools is higher (6.7%) than for Whites (6.2%) and Blacks (5.7%).<sup>37</sup> Among college faculty in the U.S., only 2.7% are Hispanic.<sup>38</sup>

High dropout rates clearly impact the numbers of those who are eligible to go on to higher education. If the pipeline problem can be resolved, the potential Hispanic enrollment could be higher. Another barrier to higher education is the lack of counselling for female students at the high school level. In Northern Virginia, for example, the Mexican American Women's National Association chapter discovered through its *Hermanitas* program that many high school girls who were juniors and seniors had no understanding of what it would take to get into college. They had received no counselling on that important subject. The organization, working with the schools, launched a local effort to meet that need.

An additional barrier to higher education is that Hispanic students are too often directed toward educational tracks that prepare them neither for college nor the work place. Another significant obstacle is money. The cost of a college education has escalated, and given the economic condition of most Hispanic families, college is not an automatic choice. Studies show that Hispanic college students rely more heavily on student loans and less on grants in financing their higher education. They rely more on family assistance and their own ability to pay for their education.<sup>39</sup>

Historically, Hispanics have tended to enroll in two-year colleges and other schools that don't offer advanced degrees in high percentages. In 1988, Hispanics comprised 7.9% of the enrollments of junior colleges. Only 3.6% of students in four-year institutions were Hispanic. "Hispanic females are more likely than males to enroll in college after high school, but by ages 20-21 are less likely to be enrolled."<sup>40</sup>

Current educational trends may negatively impact Latinas/Latinos. There's the issue of choice. For minorities, the issue of choice should be that they have the opportunity to attend a public school that offers a "choice" curriculum, "choice" educators, and "choice" learning environment, with access to such information-era icons as the computer and the other technological tools that facilitate learning. Choice and voucher proposals shift the focus from investing in the improvement and restructuring of public schools, where a majority of Latinos go for their education, to an investment in a transient educational system that may send public school students to a private-school environment that has not in the past opened its arms to all comers. One is forced to ask -- for whom is choice really being advanced?

Some 24 states are in court over the way schools are funded. In the mid-1980s, the wealthiest Texas districts were still spending an average of \$7,233 per student while the 100 poorest were spending \$2,978<sup>41</sup> -- demonstrating a tremendous funding gap that begs the issue of equity. States are looking for equity by going to court. For Latinos, this may become an increasingly important avenue to pursue.

While the movement for school restructuring continues, it is absent strong Latino voices that will help shape the schools of tomorrow. Of 96,000 school board members making school policy across the country, only 0.8% are Hispanic. Now is the time for those voices to be heard -- voices that will advocate for relevant schools that will respond to the educational needs of Hispanics and really prepare them for the future.

## Recommendations

### Federal

- Data must be collected at the federal level and it should be collected by race, ethnicity, subgroup, gender, socio-economic status and citizenship and should be cross-tabulated and disaggregated for maximum usefulness in policy making and social planning.
- Federal funding should be increased to support programs such as Head Start, Chapter 1, vocational education, higher education grant and loan programs, special science and math efforts to reach minority students, and programs that encourage minority youth to enter the teaching profession. Investment in today's youth is vital if the United States is to achieve its national goals for education and its overarching dream of becoming a world class competitor.
- Adopt loan-forgiveness programs to encourage careers in teaching.
- The federal government also should expand its funding philosophy on bilingual education to mean that all students in the United States must speak two languages to graduate. If this country is to become a strong world competitor, it must be able to conduct commerce in all languages. It should honor the natural foreign language talents that students already bring to this country's public schools and build on them by supporting programs that seek to enable every student to achieve proficiency in English as well as another language. It also should support programs that are geared to increase the number of foreign language teachers throughout the country.
- Congress should continue to reject voucher or so-called "choice" plans that would allow tax dollars to be used for private school use -- counter to the doctrine of church/state separation. Since 90 percent of all students attend public schools, the focus should be on providing adequate support to the schools where most minority and other students attend and the emphasis should be on

making public schools "choice" institutions where educational excellence is the expectation for all students.

### State/Local Education Policymakers

- Should provide in-service training for all school personnel that enables them to better deal with increasingly diverse students and their educational needs.
- In-service training on how to teach in a gender-fair manner is a must.
- Teaching materials should be reflective of the society at large -- being both representative of and including materials by women and minorities.
- Bilingualism should become a high school graduation requirement for all students.
- Parental outreach must go beyond rhetoric to meaningful efforts to make the school a unifying community rallying point. With children as a focal point, our communities have a greater chance of building for a better tomorrow.
- Schools must be restructured to address the needs of Latino and all students adequately. The existing structures clearly have not served Latinos well - as performance measures indicate. Therefore, innovation should be encouraged and supported by policymakers. That support should include the financial as well as moral support change requires. Change takes time -- more time for those involved in it and time to prove itself. Boards and administrators should be sensitive to the time demands that change will take and should be open to different work arrangements for those who engage in school restructuring. It will also require an understanding of all parents whose children may experience the changes. Keeping parents -- all parents -- informed of the changes is a must if success is to be achieved. All of the "regularities" should be questioned - from the time school starts, the curriculum and its relevance, who makes policy, to the structure of the school. Finally, change requires a strong alliance between educators,

policymakers, administrators, business, other community leaders, parents and students if it is to succeed.

- Every effort should be made to create linkages between the school and the social service agencies within the community. Where possible, they should be centered or in close proximity to schools in the interests of accessibility and supporting children and their needs.
- Counselling needs should be examined and reinforced as necessary. Too many Latinas/Latinos are not receiving assistance in examining and planning their academic or career options. At a time when students need guidance the most, meaningful contact with counselling staff is largely a void.
- Child nutrition programs should be continued and expanded to ensure that children are prepared to learn. Hungry youngsters do not make for alert students receptive to learning.
- Preschool experiences must be expanded for Latino and other less advantaged students.
- Technology resources should be expanded so that all Latino students are properly prepared and able to compete in the 21st century.

- At every governance level, policies must reflect a "universal" expectation that all children can learn and will be given maximum opportunities.

**For the Latino community, MANA calls on all families to:**

- Continue their focus on education as the chief route to economic equity.
- Become education activists to make schools they support with their tax dollars responsive to the needs of their families.
- Monitor the educational progress of their students.
- Seek representation on educational policy bodies.
- Remain skeptical of so-called "choice" plans that would allow their public tax dollars to be spent on private schools since most Latino students (90%) attend public schools that are generally underfunded. The emphasis, for the benefit of Latino students, should be on increased funding for the public schools that serve the majority of this nation's students.

# HISPANAS AND EMPLOYMENT



Hispanic women have traditionally been employed in occupations that historically have been female dominated and among the lowest paid. Despite increases in their labor force participation rates and earnings, they are still at the bottom rungs of the labor force.

Due to the lack or availability of data on Hispanic women in the work force, this report focuses on information for the last decade, since the Bureau of the Census did not report Hispanic population data by gender until 1980.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that employers give women equal consideration in employment, training, promotions, and salaries. Hispanic women, however, have failed to realize that consideration.

As Mishel and Frankel point out about the 1980's "The workers who experienced the greatest fall in real wages were those who initially had lower wages, were without a college degree, were in blue collar or service occupations, or were in the younger age brackets."<sup>1</sup> These are characteristics that describe many Hispanics and Hispanic women in particular.

**Hispanic women are the least educated in the labor force, with low percentages of women having completed four or more years of high school.**

Bean and Tienda explain that there are two types of influences on Hispanics in the work force: characteristics that are ascribed and those that are achieved.<sup>2</sup> Ascribed characteristics are national origin, nativity, and gender, while achieved characteristics include education, English proficiency, job experience, labor market conditions, unemployment rates, wage rates, and the labor market ethnic composition.

They attribute some of the differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites -- in terms of participation rates, unemployment rates, and earnings -- to these characteristics.

"Thus the most common explanation for the well-documented labor market success of native White groups is that they have greater access to quality education and job training programs; that they are more proficient in English -- a critical labor market skill for high-paying jobs; and that they exercise greater political leverage to protect their advantaged economic and social status."<sup>3</sup>

**Where Hispanic women are in the workforce today must be examined if by the year 2000, "Blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities will make up a large share of the expansion of the labor force."**<sup>4</sup>

## Labor Force Participation Rates

The labor force participation rates of Hispanic women have been increasing at a steady pace since 1980. The rate has historically declined during recessionary periods such as those in 1982 and again between 1989 and 1990.

Half the working-age Hispanic women were in the labor force in 1986 -- the first time that had ever occurred. In 1990, approximately 19% of all workers were women of color.<sup>5</sup> In March 1991, the rate for all employed Hispanic women was 56.9%; the rate for non-Hispanic women was 57.4%. Participation rates among the various subgroups were: Cuban (55.1%), Central and South American (57.6%), and other Hispanic women (55.8%), numbers which are not

statistically different. While the rate for Mexican-origin women was 50.6%, Puerto Rican-origin women had the lowest at 42.2%. Hispanic women have a slightly lower participation rate than non-Hispanics (57.4%); however, Hispanic men have a higher participation rate (78.2%) than non-Hispanic men (73.9%).<sup>6</sup>

**"From 1989 to 1990, White employment grew by 0.5%, and Hispanic employment grew by 2.7%. Hispanic workers made up 7.5% of employed persons in 1990, but accounted for 41.1% of the year's job growth."**<sup>7</sup>

More married women -- including those with children under 18 years of age -- have been joining the work force in the last decade. "In 1978, 53% of mothers with children under 18 were in the labor force; by 1988, 65% were."<sup>8</sup> The rate for mothers with children under 18 has increased to 69.4% in the last three years.

## Part-Time and Contingent Workers

"Many part-time and temporary jobs fail to provide guaranteed employment, fringe benefits, a living wage, any accommodation of family responsibilities, or opportunity for union representation."<sup>9</sup> While many workers may favor part-time and temporary work (because they are in school, staying home with children or elderly), many find themselves in a situation in which they do not choose to be.

"Many retail sales and service workers who want full-time work find that it isn't available; involuntary part-time was a particular problem for women in sales and service occupations last year."<sup>10</sup>

Almost one million women in service occupations -- where over 25% of Hispanic women are employed<sup>11</sup> -- worked part-time for economic reasons, which means involuntarily.<sup>12</sup>

According to duRivage, part-time workers earned about 60% of the hourly wages of full-time workers in 1987: \$4.42 an hour, compared to \$7.43.<sup>13</sup> The median weekly earnings for part-time workers in 1990 ranged from \$109 for Black women to \$125 for White women.<sup>14</sup>

Women tend to work part-time because good child care is not available. "Half of these women who worked part-time in 1983 said they would rather work full-time but were constrained by the high costs and the unavailability of quality child care."<sup>15</sup>

In 1990, the majority of part-time workers were women, regardless of race or ethnic origin. Of 16,483,000 White part-time workers, 11,564,000 (70%) were women; for Black and Hispanic women, the rates were 64% and 61% respectively.<sup>16</sup>

**Part-time workers earn less and lack health care coverage and pensions.**

The least protected group is seasonal agricultural workers. Eighty-two percent receive no private health benefits through their employers.<sup>17</sup> Hispanics constitute the majority of the migrant and seasonal farmworker population in the United States<sup>18</sup> -- a large proportion of them are Hispanic women.<sup>19</sup> "Among this group, health problems are compounded by exposure to potentially harmful pesticides, severely debilitating living environments, and little or no access to health care."

**An overwhelming number of seasonal farm workers -- 90% of the total 1.3 million -- have no pension coverage.**<sup>21</sup>

## Education and Labor

In 1989, the number of Hispanic women ages 18 to 64 who had completed four years of high school or more was the lowest at 64.3% compared to 86.2% for White women.<sup>22</sup>

The median years of education in 1989 for Hispanic women 15 years old and over -- as well as for Hispanic men -- was 11.8.<sup>23</sup> Yet the median years of education required by new jobs created between 1984 and 2000 will increase from 12.8 to 13.5.<sup>24</sup> "By the year 2000, only 14% of all jobs will be suitable for people with less than a high school education."<sup>25</sup>

The higher the level of education, the higher a person's occupation will be -- and thus the higher the earnings. The correlation between educational attainment and occupation is very clear among Hispanic women. They have the least educational attainment and the lowest level jobs.

Only 30.7% of Hispanic women employed in private households and 31.8% working as machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors had completed four years of high school or more.

Women, regardless of race or ethnicity, earn less than men with the same years of education. Men may earn from \$4,000 to \$15,000 more than women from the same segment of the population.

## Unemployment Rates

The 1990 unemployment rates for the total population, 16 years and over were as follows: Whites, 5.5%; Blacks, 11.3%; and Hispanics: 8.0%.

Unemployment rates among men and women are not statistically different from the rates for the total population.<sup>26</sup>

In 1990, Hispanics comprised 7.7% of the labor force and 11.2% of the unemployed.<sup>27</sup> During the recessionary period in 1989 to 1990, there was an increase in the number of unemployed women. The rate for all women rose one percentage point to 6.1%.

The rate for all Hispanic women went from 8.5% to 9.2%. Among Hispanics, the rates for Mexican American and Puerto Rican women were 9.2% and 8.3%, respectively, in 1991. That compared to 9.8% and 9.1% in 1990. Cuban-origin women reached an unemployment rate of 8.0%, compared to 5.1% the previous year; for Central and South American females, the rate was 10.8% in 1991 and 6.3% in 1990.<sup>28</sup>

## Occupations

Traditionally, Hispanic women, as well as other women of color, have been disproportionately concentrated in the unskilled and/or semi-skilled occupations. Although there are six employment categories used by the Bureau of the Census, the majority of women work within two -- technical and service occupations. Two-thirds of all Hispanic women are employed in these two.

Hispanic women in the technical, sales, and administrative support occupations accounted for 39.8%. Only Puerto Rican (47.2%) and Cuban origin women (50.0%) had slightly higher rates in these jobs than did all women (44.1%) in March 1991.

In service occupations, which includes jobs in private households and protective services, Hispanic women have a rate which is almost 10% higher than the rate for all women: 26.2% compared to 17.6%. For Central and South American women, that rate was nearly double.

While 27.2% of all women and 28.0% of non-Hispanic women are employed in managerial and professional specialty occupations, the rate is only 15.8% for all Hispanic women.<sup>29</sup>

## Wages and Earnings

Hispanic women are at the lowest end of the pay scale. In 1990, the median earnings of Hispanic women were \$10,099, 21% less than that of non-Hispanic women. Of all Hispanics, Cuban women have the highest earnings at \$12,904, surpassing the \$12,438 in earnings of non-Hispanic women. Almost half (49.5%) of all Hispanic women had earnings of less than \$10,000; 88.6% of all Hispanic women made less than \$24,999.

Only 0.9% had earnings of \$50,000 or more, compared to twice that number for all women (2.1%) and non-Hispanic women (2.2%).<sup>30</sup>

The disparity becomes more evident when median weekly earnings are compared. In 1990, the median weekly earnings of Hispanic women were \$280, compared to \$355 for White women.<sup>31</sup> The ratio is .78. For every dollar earned by a White male, Hispanic women received 56 cents. In contrast, White females earn 71.4 cents and Black females earn 62 cents to every dollar earned by a White male.

In comparing the ratio of female-to-male earnings over the last several decades, say Bean and Tienda, there were decreases between 1960 and 1970 and increases between 1970 and 1980.

The Bureau of the Census reports that "women's median earnings have generally been increasing faster than men's earning throughout the 1980s."<sup>32</sup> But they have a longer way to go to close the wage gap.

## Family Income

The income of White married couples is the highest among all family types. Women who are heads of households, regardless of race or ethnic origin, have the

lowest median family incomes. Hispanic women heads of household have the lowest income at \$11,914. Two-parent Hispanic families averaged \$23,431 and married couples, \$27,996. The median income of Hispanic families declined by 5.2% in 1990.

Among female householders, Hispanics have an income which is almost half that of White women (\$19,528) and a fourth the income of White married couples (\$40,331), as the following table indicates. For families, the ratio of Black-to-White and Hispanic-to-White incomes in 1990 were .58 and .63, respectively.

Although family earnings have been increasing slowly, the growth is due to more women working. Many of those women have children. "The problem is not that more women or mothers are going to work, but that so many are doing so because it is the only way to maintain family income in the face of lower real wages."<sup>33</sup> If mothers in two-parent families had not joined the workforce, there would not have been an increase in family incomes between 1979 and 1987.

Mishel and Frankel point out that the greatest increase in earners per family has been in the lower income groups.<sup>34</sup>

Today, more so than in the last recession, families depend more on women's earnings. "Between 1979 and 1987, the proportion of family earnings contributed by women rose from 24% to 29%."<sup>35</sup>

## Female Householders

"The proportion of families maintained by women grew about 90% between 1970 and 1985."<sup>36</sup>

Hispanic families with a female householder, no husband present, had a 1990 median income of \$11,914 and represented 19.1% of all families.<sup>37</sup> In the previous year,

these women earned \$11,745, a -3.8 % change in real median income between 1989 and 1990.<sup>38</sup>

The number of Hispanic single parents increased an average of 7% per year from 1980 to 1990. The rates for Whites and Blacks were 3.1% and 3.8%, respectively.<sup>39</sup>

## Unions

"Hispanic Americans are more likely than non-Hispanics to organize and join labor unions in their efforts toward economic advancement."<sup>40</sup> The advantages to Hispanic participation in unions include higher wages, health care coverage, pensions and other benefits. Hispanic women who were members or represented by a union had median weekly earnings which were **37.9% more** than Hispanic women who were non-union.<sup>41</sup>

## Issues of Special Concern

**IMMIGRATION** -- Immigrant women suffer a triple burden of discrimination based on sex, race, and their immigration status. Most often, they are in this country without command of the language or familiarity with the culture and legal system, and thus isolated. Women are threatened with deportation. "They are vulnerable to sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, wage and hour violations, and health and safety violations and generally lack legal avenues to redress these abuses."<sup>42</sup>

According to a 1983 study, Mexican-American and Puerto Rican women "reported they experienced racial and cultural discrimination in addition to sex discrimination."<sup>43</sup>

Due to the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), immigrant women who cannot prove that they are in this country legally will not be able work. IRCA imposes

finest on employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers.

**DISCRIMINATION** -- Because Hispanics have been segregated in low-income neighborhoods and treated as second-class citizens in areas of high Hispanic concentration, argue Bean and Tienda, Hispanics have been subjected to greater discrimination in obtaining high levels of quality education. Until Hispanics, and women in particular, attain higher levels of education, their place in the work force will remain as it is today.

"The idea that discrimination is partly responsible for these unequal outcomes centers on the ability of non-Hispanic workers to protect their economic and political interests through exclusion and residential segregation. Within the labor market employers may discriminate against Hispanic origin workers based on accented or imperfect English and/or Mestizo racial characteristics, as well as Spanish surnames and other visible ethnic traits."<sup>44</sup>

The concentration of women in few occupations that are typically low-wage with little room for advancement may be due to discrimination, according to the Commission on Civil Rights.

The Commission defines discrimination as "a process that can be transposed from individual attitudes and actions into social structures and business organizations. Once institutionalized, discriminatory procedures cause: unequal results along the lines of race, sex, and national origin, which in turn reinforce existing practices and breed damaging inequalities that set the process in motion in the first place."<sup>45</sup>

**NON-TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS** -- Non-traditional occupations -- in which 25% or less of the workforce is female -- pay more since they are occupied by men. In 1991, 104,000 Hispanic women worked in the skilled trades, representing less than 1% of the total number

of women in these occupations, according to the Labor Department Women's Bureau.

Only 9% of working women are in non-traditional occupations and less than that same percentage of women in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs were in nontraditional training.<sup>46</sup>

No information on how difficult it is for Hispanic women to enter these jobs or how they are treated is available.

**INADEQUATE OR UNAVAILABLE CHILD CARE** -- The number of mothers staying home and providing full-time care for their children is one in three.<sup>47</sup>

"Twenty-five percent of mothers of pre-school children who are not in the paid work force said they would work if they had had access to safe and affordable child care," according to *Wider Opportunities for Women*.<sup>48</sup> It is estimated that there are 1.1 million mothers in the 21-29 age group, representing 14% of the total population in their age group and 23% of those who were out of the labor force in 1986.<sup>49</sup>

Among Hispanic mothers ages 21-29 who were not in the labor force because of child-care problems, the rate was the highest at 40.6% (as a percentage of all mothers not in the labor force). For Black mothers, it was 29.0% and 19.9% for White mothers.

In 1991, child care payments amounted to 7% of the monthly family income.<sup>50</sup> The average weekly cost of child care for younger women was about \$60 and \$45 for older women (in 1988 dollars).<sup>51</sup> "Good care with persons other than relative is often difficult to find or is too expensive, especially for families with low incomes."<sup>52</sup> For poor mothers, weekly child-care expenditures comprised, on average, more than a quarter of their weekly family income, compared to 8.2% for the nonpoor.<sup>53</sup>

**ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE** -- In the United States, health insurance is tied to employment, but oftentimes it is not provided for employees. The highest uninsured rate is among women working in traditionally female occupations. Sixty-two percent of all minimum wage earners and half of all women workers earning \$5.00 or less per hour are without health insurance.<sup>54</sup>

A major problem for Hispanics is the limited coverage through Medicare, which is available to unemployed people, but not the working poor. "Poor health subsequently contributes to chronic illnesses, physical disability, and sometimes, mental disability (e.g., depression and alcoholism). These conditions, in turn, can interfere with labor force participation, preventing the individual from earning the income and gaining the job experience necessary to become upwardly mobile."<sup>55</sup>

**POVERTY** -- Low educational attainment means low level jobs and equals lower income potential -- all of which contribute to poverty.

Hispanic families are especially likely to be poor. Their poverty rate in 1990 was 28.1%, slightly less than the rate for Blacks at 31.9%. Whites had a poverty rate of 10.7% and Asians and Pacific Islanders a rate of 12.2%.

That same year, about 17.9% of the poor were of Hispanic origin, compared to only 10.3% in 1973.<sup>56</sup>

Families with a female householder and no husband present accounted for 53.1% of poor families last year. This type of household also accounted for 83.8% of the net increase in poor families between 1989 and 1990.<sup>57</sup> In comparison, the number of married-couple families living in poverty was only 5.6%.<sup>58</sup>

The poverty rate for Hispanic female-headed households is almost twice the rate of White female households. For Hispanic two-parent families, the poverty rate is more than three times that of their White counterparts.

The poverty threshold varies according to the Census Bureau: \$6,652 for a person living alone, \$13,359 for a family of four, to \$26,848 for a family of nine or more persons.<sup>59</sup>

In 1979, 31.7% of Hispanics and 24.3% of Whites earned poverty level wages; by 1987, the rates had increased to 42.1% and 29.3%, respectively.

## Recommendations

### Federal, State, and local policymakers should:

- Address and develop public policy on the full spectrum of barriers to full and equitable participation in the workforce, including access to education and training, adequate child care, affordable health insurance, elimination of language barriers, and immigration-related issues that serve as roadblocks to employment.
- Hold federal agencies accountable for enforcement and monitoring of all anti-discrimination laws, including all aspects of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and, that they withhold funding from all agencies found in noncompliance.

- Address and develop public policy based on a changing workforce that is increasingly female and minority.
- Encourage the creation of affordable and meaningful child care facilities for workers that provide opportunities for children, tomorrow's workers, to grow and flourish physically and intellectually and that encourage -- not punish -- second language abilities.
- Support measures that would lead to affordable health insurance for all workers.
- Collect and publish more complete data on Hispanic workers.
- Collect data on federally funded employment training programs to determine how Hispanics fare.

### Hispanic organizations should:

- Continue to advocate for more data collection in a usable form.
- Should continue to monitor and report their findings on the employment of Hispanics at all levels of government.
- Should continue to advocate for more employment of Hispanics at all government levels.
- Support research that indicates how Hispanics fare in all work settings, including the corporate world.

## PAY EQUITY: AN ISSUE FOR HISPANAS



Pay equity is an important economic issue for Hispanic women, men and their families. Like most women, Hispanic women are often segregated into a small number of low-paying occupations. Studies show that the more an occupation is dominated by women or people of color, the less it pays.

Hispanic women in particular are among the lowest paid of all U.S. workers. In 1990, Hispanic women averaged only 54 cents for every dollar earned by White men, while Black women earned 62 cents and White women earned 69 cents to every White man's dollar.

In 1990 alone, it is estimated that discriminatory wage differentials between men and women amounted to an \$80 to \$120 billion loss of wages for women.

Hispanic and Black men are also at a disadvantage in the labor market, earning 66 cents and 73 cents, respectively, to every White man's dollar. Part of the wage and occupation gap between White men and other minority groups is attributable to education, experience or time in the workforce. But these factors cannot adequately explain the disparities in pay that happen across the occupational board. High school educated White men still earn more than college educated Hispanic women.

### Inequity Hurts All Latinos

Pay inequity hurts Hispanic women and men, their families and, ultimately, affects the overall financial strength of the Hispanic community and the U.S. economy.

Pay equity is a remedy for wage discrimination. It is simply a fair means of setting wages and salaries based on the skills, experience, working conditions and responsibility required in jobs. Pay equity strengthens families by reinforcing their monetary safety net and ensuring that the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter are adequately met. It allows some families the income needed to afford health insurance premiums and quality child care and provides others with the ability to further their children's education. Today, just over half of all Hispanic women are employed workers. Their incomes are essential to the well being of their families.

To date, the pay equity movement has brought over half a billion dollars in wage adjustments to public sector workers. Pay equity has been achieved primarily through the efforts of women's and civil rights organizations, labor unions and other community activists, who organized effective coalitions and convinced their state and local government leaders to evaluate their state or community's wage setting system for sex- or race- based pay disparities. Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia have completed or begun pay equity studies. Twenty states have made some equity adjustments to the pay of women and minority workers.

### Public Favors Pay Equity

A recent National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) poll found that a majority of American voters continue to believe that women and minorities are often underpaid for their work

and would favor pay equity laws to correct wage disparities; 60% of Hispanic, 64% of Black, and 68% of White voters indicated that women are paid less fairly than men for the work that they perform. Another 51% of Hispanic, 80% of Blacks and 49% of White voters indicated that Black and Hispanic voters are often paid less fairly for their work.

NCPE's poll found that support for pay equity was broad across all demographic groups, but was particularly intense among women, Hispanic, and Black voters. Seventy-eight percent of Hispanic and 86% of Blacks indicated support for a pay equity law requiring that men, women and minorities be paid the same for work requiring similar skills and responsibilities, even if the actual jobs were different.

Voters support pay equity because they understand that an increase in wages of women and minority workers will help to increase overall household income and benefit families. This feeling is especially strong among Hispanic and Black voters. Sixty percent of Hispanics and 73% of Blacks believe pay equity will increase overall household income, compared to 57% of White voters.

## Equity Could Stimulate Economy

Pay equity has the potential to stimulate the larger economy as well. More equitable incomes could eliminate the dependence on government assistance programs. In NCPE's poll, 61% of Hispanics, 76% of Blacks and 50% of White voters were convinced that when women do not get paid equitably, they may turn to social programs and welfare for support. An Institute for Women's Policy Research study found that one reason why women on the Aid to Families with Dependent children program were more likely to cycle between welfare and work was because the income from employment was not enough to pull their families above the poverty line.

**Pay equity could make a significant difference to the 47% of families supported by Hispanic women who fall below the poverty level.**

Those who are against pay equity argue that it will hurt White men's salaries and upset the economy. But federal law provides safeguards so that no employee can be subjected to a pay reduction to cover the cost of remedying discrimination. Pay equity does not tamper with the laws of supply and demand or the development of wage-setting systems.

Some argue that pay equity will disrupt the economy with inflated costs for implementation. However, study after study has found that implementation costs have been minimal compared to the total personnel budget of the employer in question. Pay equity can only benefit businesses and the economy in the long-run as employees gain increasing purchasing power.

Pay equity is a good idea. And most voters agree. Support for pay equity cuts across race, income, and party boundaries. When every working person has pay equity, our families will be stronger and so will our economy. Pay equity benefits everyone.

## Labor Force Participation

Women of Hispanic origin in 1988 made up 6.5% (3.6 million) of the total women in the civilian labor force (54.7 million).<sup>1</sup>

- At an annual rate of 8.3% in 1990, Hispanic women were less likely than Black women (10.8%), but more likely than White women (4.6%) to be unemployed.<sup>2</sup>
- Hispanic women are less likely than Black or White women to participate in the labor force. In 1990, 53% of Hispanic women were in the labor force compared to 60% of Black women and 58% of White women.<sup>3</sup>

## Wage Gap

Hispanic women have the lowest average in total earnings and wages according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Forty-seven and a half percent of families maintained by Hispanic women were below the poverty level in 1991.<sup>4</sup>

**Median Weekly Earnings and  
Wage Gap Data of  
Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers in 1991<sup>5</sup>**

|                | Weekly<br>Earnings | Wage<br>Gap |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------|
| White men      | \$509              | 100%        |
| White women    | \$374              | 74%         |
| Black men      | \$374              | 74%         |
| Black women    | \$323              | 63%         |
| Hispanic men   | \$328              | 63%         |
| Hispanic women | \$293              | 58%         |

**1990 Median Annual Earnings of  
Year Round, Full-Time Workers<sup>6</sup>**

|                |      |          |
|----------------|------|----------|
| All Men        | 100% | \$27,866 |
| All Women      | 71%  | \$19,816 |
| Hispanic women | 54%  | \$15,672 |
| Black women    | 62%  | \$18,040 |
| White women    | 69%  | \$20,048 |
| Hispanic men   | 66%  | \$19,136 |
| Black men      | 73%  | \$21,114 |
| White men      | 100% | \$28,881 |

## Occupational Segregation

Hispanic women tend to be concentrated in certain types of occupations. In 1988 "the largest proportion of employed Hispanic women (41.1%) were concentrated in the

technical, sales, and administrative support occupations."<sup>7</sup> Many Hispanic women were employed as administrative aides, retail salespeople, teachers aides, etc. Sales, technical, and administrative support occupations are often low wage work providing few benefits.

**Top Twelve Occupations in 1987  
With High Concentration of  
Hispanic Women<sup>8</sup>**

| Occupation            | % Hispanic Women<br>in Occupation |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Graders, agricultural | 21.43%                            |
| Housekeepers          | 16.58%                            |
| Sewing machine op.    | 13.49%                            |
| Electrical assembler  | 12.89%                            |
| Dressmakers           | 10.50%                            |
| Teacher's aides       | 10.07%                            |
| Graders, exc. ag.     | 9.94%                             |
| Adjusters             | 9.59%                             |
| Launderers            | 9.46%                             |
| Pressing machine      | 9.43%                             |
| Solderers             | 9.27%                             |
| Private Household     | 9.20%                             |

## Nontraditional Labor

Very few women workers can be found in the skilled trades or other manual occupations.<sup>9</sup> In 1991, 104,000 Hispanic women worked in the skilled trades, representing less than 1% of the total number of women in these occupations. Twenty-eight percent of Hispanic women in the skilled trades are concentrated in the precision production occupations such as electrical or electronic equipment assemblers.

Women of Hispanic origin were more likely to be found in manual occupations, rather than in the skilled trades. They made up 3% of all operators, fabricators and laborers.<sup>10</sup>

## Future Outlook

Between 1990 and 2005 women of Hispanic origin will increase their labor force participation by 80%. Total participation of Hispanic women will grow from 53.0% (1990) to 58.0% (2005).<sup>11</sup>

Current Bureau of Labor Statistics projections show that more occupations will be requiring higher education as a standard of employment. Hispanics are currently the fastest-growing labor force group. Hispanics currently have a lower rate of educational attainment. In 1991, 41% of Hispanics had not finished high school. These two factors could limit job opportunities and wages for Hispanics, especially women, in the future.<sup>12</sup>

## Recommendations

### Federal, state and local policymakers:

- Should support legislation and efforts that seek to determine if pay systems are equitable by race, ethnicity and sex.

- Should take steps to alliviate discriminatory pay practices and systems.

### Latinas should:

- Seek to educate Latinas/Latinos of all ages on the issue of pay equity and work to eliminate it when it is discovered.
- Support and advocate for initiatives that seek to determine whether pay systems are fair or inequitable.
- Support efforts and measures that call for equity in compensation.

(This paper was prepared by the National Committee on Pay Equity in cooperation with MANA's Economic Equity Project.)

# HISPANAS AND HEALTH



While assessing the health of Hispanics -- women and children in particular -- is difficult due to the insufficient collection of data, some important Hispanic health concerns are well documented.<sup>1</sup> And the available data gives fuel to the notion that: "Medicine is tiered according to class."<sup>2</sup>

The United States spent more per person on health care in 1985 (\$1,800) compared to Canada (\$1,300), Japan (\$800) and Great Britain (\$600).<sup>3</sup>

It is estimated that America's health care bill this year will be \$817 billion, or 14% of the Gross National Product.<sup>4</sup> Yet many of its citizens lack adequate health care, due to lack of access to services and health insurance.

In 1991, families spent 12% of their income on annual health payments, an increase of 3% from the previous decade. It is projected that by the year 2000, average health payments will consume 16% of the average family income.<sup>5</sup>

## Utilization of Services

Women have higher rates of medical care utilization than men since their needs during childbearing years are greater than those of men of comparable age. Thus more women confront more barriers to health services than men.<sup>6</sup>

Hispanics tend to use less preventive health care than other ethnic/racial groups. For example, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans and Mexican Americans ages 45-64 each average 4.8 visits to a physician per year. White adults, on the other hand, had two more annual visits than Hispanic adults.<sup>7</sup>

A major hurdle for Latinas is access to primary care -- routine (preventive) health services that could minimize later health care needs.

A study of the Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HHANES), 1982-84 indicates that the percentage of Hispanic women whose last PAP smear was over 5 years ago or never were high: Mexican American, 15.4%; Cuban American, 17.8% and Puerto Rican, 13.3%.<sup>8</sup>

Only one third of Hispanic women had a routine physical, eye examination, and dental checkup in over two years, according to HHANES results.

"Mexican Americans are the least likely of the three Hispanic groups [Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans in the study] to be recent users of preventive services."<sup>9</sup>

More Hispanic adults ages 45-64 reported fair to poor health than Whites. The rate for Puerto Ricans was almost double that of Whites, 31.6% and 15.6%, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

When in need of medical services, Hispanics tend to use the hospital more, especially through the emergency room.<sup>11</sup> For example, 13.5% of Puerto Ricans use hospital emergency rooms and almost 50% use hospital outpatient clinics as their usual source of health care.<sup>12</sup> Hispanics have longer and more expensive hospital stays when compared to Whites.<sup>13</sup>

The study by Solis et al. concludes that "Lack of health insurance is a barrier to the use of preventive services, particularly among Mexican Americans."<sup>14</sup>

## Health Insurance

In the United States, "Lack of health insurance is a primary barrier to the receipt of adequate and timely health care."<sup>15</sup>

A 1992 General Accounting Office (GAO) report found that the "likelihood of being uninsured in the United States is greater among young adults, minorities, unmarried people, and those with less than a high school education."<sup>16</sup> Large percentages of Hispanic women fall in all those categories and all of those conditions relate to Hispanic family units.

In 1989, 33% of Hispanics (over 6 million persons) were uninsured, compared to 19% for Blacks and about 12% for Whites, according to a Current Population Survey.<sup>17</sup> In California, for example, the rate of uninsured Hispanics was a little higher at 35%, compared to 13% of Whites and 15% of Blacks.<sup>18</sup> A poll on women of color found that almost 40% of those surveyed said they did not have health insurance.<sup>19</sup>

The "working poor" -- those who work but are still at the official poverty level -- are especially vulnerable: they cannot afford the rising costs of medical services nor are they eligible for assistance through governmental programs.<sup>20</sup>

Hispanic family members under age 65 are more likely to be uninsured even when there is an adult worker employed: 35% compared to 24% for Black families and 13% for White families.<sup>21</sup>

Hispanics, women in particular, tend to be employed in the service industries. These are industries that tend not to provide health insurance coverage. A 1987 National Medical Expenditure Survey shows that 20% of Hispanic workers were employed in industries with high rates of uninsured employees (30-32%). The rate for White workers was 15% and 12% for Black workers.

Almost a third of employed Hispanic women lack health insurance. The National Council of La Raza states that only 69.6% of working Hispanic females had some form of health insurance, compared to 87.4% of White and 80.8% of Black employed females.<sup>22</sup>

The same report also shows that more than half of "working poor" Latinas have no health insurance, compared to two in five for White and one in three for Black women. Moreover, only one-fifth of the low-income, working Hispanic women has private health insurance. Among their counterparts, the rate was almost one-fourth for Blacks and more than one-third for Whites.

"Poverty and ill health are related in a cycle generally seen as debilitating: disadvantaged people get sick because they are poor; then, because they are ill, work less or lose their jobs and become still poorer."<sup>23</sup>

Among seasonal workers, health is a main concern. Some estimate the number of these workers who are Hispanic between 80% and 90%. Hispanic women make up a large proportion of the migrant worker population. "Among this group, health problems are compounded by exposure to potentially harmful pesticides, severely debilitating living environments, and little or no access to health care."<sup>24</sup>

## Medicare/Medicaid

Medicare is a health program for persons over 65 who are eligible to receive monthly Social Security benefits. They are automatically entitled to receive Medicare.

Rates among the elderly receiving Medicare are high: 96% of elderly Whites; 95% of elderly Blacks; and 91% of elderly Hispanic. However, among Hispanic elderly, there are approximately 42,000 (4%) who are not covered by Medicare or any other health insurance.<sup>25</sup>

Another program is Medicaid, a joint federal and state medical financing program for low-income individuals and families.

Medicaid assists those who are categorically needy or medically needy. Its eligibility criteria is determined by each state, within federal guidelines. "Two of the most restrictive states are Texas and Florida, in which about 3 of every 10 Hispanics in the United States reside."<sup>26</sup>

Because Puerto Ricans have higher proportions of female-headed households eligible for Medicaid under Aid to Families with Dependent Children and are more likely to reside in states that provide greater optional coverage under Medicaid, they are more likely than other sub-groups to be covered by Medicaid.<sup>27</sup>

## Access to Health Care

Almost one third of all Hispanics do not have access to a regular source of health care while the rate for Blacks is one in five.<sup>28</sup>

"Access to medical care is not the only ingredient for assuring good health. Good health is also based on biological, behavioral (lifestyle), sociocultural (e.g., income and education), and environmental factors."<sup>29</sup>

A recent GAO report found that another barrier is the shortage of physicians serving Hispanic communities. A case in point is El Paso, "where only 30 of the city's 800 physicians (4%) maintain practices in the poorest part of the city -- an area that houses 170,000 people (32% of the El Paso population)."<sup>30</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that of all physicians, only 4.5% were Hispanics; Hispanic nurses numbered 2.5%.

For Hispanic women in particular, language and cultural differences present a significant barrier. Language plays a

major role in the use of preventive care by Hispanics: "Patients who speak English are more likely to have a regular source of medical care compared with those who speak only Spanish."<sup>31</sup>

"Programs which are not culturally competent suffer the following negative impacts: persons dropping out, misdiagnosis, rejection and disqualification of safety or preventive messages, failure to mobilize all resources for a person or family, and poor compliance with treatment plans."<sup>32</sup> One in five Latinas cite "poor treatment/don't like the doctor" as a major reason for dissatisfaction with medical care.<sup>33</sup>

Other barriers include distances to facilities and cost. Almost half the women in a National Center for Health Statistics study reported cost as a barrier to unmet health care needs. According to the Women of Color Reproductive Health Poll, 61% of Latinas (compared to 28% of Black and 38% of Asian women) said that the reason why medical care is not easy to get is that it is too expensive.<sup>34</sup>

Even when health services are available, there may be a long wait which poses yet another barrier for women. For example, in one Chicago public health clinic, "Women must wait 135 days for a family planning visit, 82 days for a maternal visit, and 104 days for a pediatric visit."<sup>35</sup>

## Illnesses

Hispanics suffer from excess incidence of certain cancers --stomach, esophagus, pancreas, and cervix, according to existing data. The death rate from stomach cancer is twice that of non-Hispanic Whites. The incidence of cervical cancer is twice among Hispanic women than non-Hispanic White women. And lung cancer is increasing due to smoking.<sup>36</sup>

Other high risk diseases for Hispanics are tuberculosis and diabetes. The rate of tuberculosis is four times that of

non-Hispanic Whites, while the risk of diabetes for Hispanics is three times that of non-Hispanic Whites.

**Prevalence of Diabetes Among  
Persons 45-74 years of age:<sup>37</sup>**

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Mexican-American   | 23.9% |
| Cuban American     | 15.8% |
| Puerto Rican       | 26.1% |
| Non-Hispanic Black | 19.3% |
| Non-Hispanic White | 12.0% |

"The leading causes of death for Hispanics reflect important differences between their health experience and that of the general population."<sup>38</sup> Heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries and chronic liver disease ranked higher for Hispanics. Homicide, AIDS, and perinatal conditions were among the top 10 killers of Hispanics, whereas none of these conditions were among the major killers of non-Hispanic whites.<sup>39</sup>

## HIV/AIDS

It is estimated that by the year 2000, 30-40% of AIDS cases will be among women, children and adolescents. Although Hispanics comprise just over 9% of the U.S. population (September 1991), they account for 16.3% of all U.S. AIDS cases.<sup>40</sup>

Women represent about 11% of the total AIDS cases in the U.S. (17,000 of 185,000).<sup>41</sup> The cumulative incidence rates for pediatric AIDS cases in 1991 was 13.8% for Hispanic children while it was under 2% for non-Hispanic White children.<sup>42</sup> This represents three times the percentage of female and pediatric AIDS cases given their percentage of the population.<sup>43</sup>

Hispanic pediatric AIDS cases account for 25% of total pediatric AIDS cases.<sup>44</sup> While Hispanic women represent 8.6% of the female population, they account for 21.9% of the reported female AIDS cases.<sup>45</sup>

Nationally, AIDS is the fifth leading cause of premature death in women. In several cities, it is the leading cause of death in women 15-49 years of age. As a result of perinatal transmission, AIDS is now the leading cause of death among Hispanic children and the second leading cause of death among Black children in this country.<sup>46</sup> In New York State, for example, HIV infection/AIDS was the leading cause of death among Latino children 1-4 years of age in 1988, exceeding deaths from unintentional injuries.<sup>47</sup>

"Hispanic women are being infected with HIV at a faster rate than White women."<sup>48</sup> Reported AIDS cases among Hispanic women grew by 38% between 1990 and 1991 and 32% for White women during the same period. Yet, almost 75% of Latinas in a reproductive health poll said they have no chance of contracting the AIDS virus.<sup>49</sup> The same poll found that of Hispanic women who have never thought of being tested for the AIDS virus, 91% said there was no need to because they were not at risk.

Studies have found that AIDS in women kills faster than AIDS in men. Women die within four to six months after being diagnosed; men die after two years.<sup>50</sup>

## Reproductive Health

Almost 40% of Latinas (compared to 26% of African American and 11% of Asian women) do not talk to anyone about abortion or family planning.<sup>51</sup>

**BIRTH CONTROL** -- Contraceptive use among Hispanic women is low: only 50% of Hispanic women age 15-44 were currently using some form of birth control in 1988; the rate for their White counterparts was 63% and 57%

for Blacks.<sup>52</sup> An overwhelming 86% of Latinas did not use birth control because they felt they did not need it; 52% of these women were between the ages of 18 and 44. Almost one-fourth, compared to one-third of Black and two-thirds of Native American women, are single women who have given birth.

Despite popular belief, Catholicism is not an obstacle to effective contraceptive use, according to a study of religion and fertility among Puerto Rican women. About 44% of Catholics compared to 40% of non-Catholics were using contraception.<sup>53</sup>

**STERILIZATION** -- Latinas, along with Black and Native American women are more likely than White women to be victims of involuntary sterilization or hysterectomies for contraceptive purposes.<sup>54</sup>

According to a survey of Puerto Rican women in Hartford, CT, over 50% of the women in the 153 households interviewed were sterilized.<sup>55</sup> In this same survey, over 25% of the women reported that the source of the idea to be sterilized was a doctor or nurse; another 22% said a friend or relative; and 40% reported it was her own idea.<sup>56</sup>

"Due to the dearth of effective methods, sterilization remains the number one form of birth control in the United States."<sup>57</sup>

**ABORTION** -- Among abortion patients who are young, poor, Black, Hispanic or less educated, the rate of no consistency in the use of the same method of birth control is greatest.<sup>58</sup> The rate for Hispanic women was 58% and 42% among White women.

While Hispanic women represented 8% of the U.S. population in 1987, they made up 13% of women having an abortion that year.<sup>59</sup> The rate of abortion among Hispanic women exceeded that of the population as a whole (8.4%).

"Over three-fourths of Hispanic women attributed difficulties in getting an abortion to it being against their values or religion."<sup>60</sup>

**TEEN PREGNANCY** -- Hispanic adolescents (persons 15-19 years of age) are more likely to give birth than non-Hispanic Whites, 16.1% and 9.6%, respectively. Among the Hispanic subgroups, there is significant variation: the rate for Puerto Ricans was 20.9%; other Hispanic, 18.0%; Mexican American, 16.9%; Central/South American, 7.9%; and Cuban American, 5.9%.<sup>61</sup>

While the rate of condom use at first intercourse among young Hispanic women tripled between 1982 and 1988 from 12.8% to 41.8%, the percentage of sexually active women who used contraceptives at first intercourse is 15% less than non-Hispanic White women (53.9% compared to 69.0%).<sup>62</sup> Births to unwed teenagers doubled between 1970 and 1985 to 60%.<sup>63</sup>

Studies show that 20% of all premarital teen pregnancies occur within one month after the first sexual intercourse and 50% in the first six months.<sup>64</sup>

In 1988, less than half (47%) of Hispanic adolescent women used family planning services. The rate for non-Hispanic Black teens was 75% and for non-Hispanic White teens it was 61%.<sup>65</sup>

**PRENATAL CARE** -- "Children born to women who receive no prenatal care are three times more likely to die in the first year of life than those who receive comprehensive care."<sup>66</sup> They are more likely to be born too soon or too small.

Approximately 40% of Latinas, compared to 21% of White women, received no prenatal care.<sup>67</sup>

Hispanic women are far more likely than White women to receive prenatal care later or not at all. The rate for

Hispanic women last year was 12.1% and only 4.1% for White women.<sup>68</sup>

Among low-income Hispanic women, Puerto Rican females were most likely to receive late or no prenatal care (17.4%, followed by 13.4% for Mexican American women).<sup>69</sup>

The number of women in the Hispanic subgroups who received prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy was much lower than White women. In 1989, 56.7% of Mexican American mothers, 60.8% of Central and South American mothers, and 62.7% of Puerto Rican mothers received such care, compared to 82.7% of White mothers.<sup>70</sup>

Almost one-half of Latinas who did not seek regular care felt that because they were healthy they did not need to see a doctor regularly during their last pregnancy, according to the Women of Color Reproductive Health Poll.<sup>71</sup>

## Children's Health

Only 52% of poor children, compared to 80% of non-poor children, normally visit a physician's office for regular checkups and other routine preventive care. "They miss out on many of the immunizations, well-baby checkups, blood tests, lead poisoning checks and similar preventive services considered essential to preserving good health and normal growth." Among poor children without Medicaid, 30.8% did not receive adequate preventive care, compared to 20% of all children, poor or not.<sup>72</sup>

As many adults do for their health care, children also go to different places sporadically for routine checkups - one time to a hospital clinic, another time to a doctor's office, a community health center, or hospital emergency room.

Children constitute 28% of the 36 million Americans without health insurance. "Two-thirds of uninsured children

live in families where at least one person was employed throughout 1990."<sup>73</sup>

## Immunization Rates

In 1985, public officials in the United States stopped counting childhood immunization rates.<sup>74</sup> According to the Children's Defense Fund, the United States ranked 15th in the proportion of one-year-old children fully immunized against polio. When immunizations are begun in the first months of life, they can eliminate the death and disability that can result from preventable childhood diseases.<sup>76</sup> **For every \$1 spent on the childhood immunizations program, \$10 are saved in later medical costs.**<sup>77</sup>

Yet, immunization rates in the early 1980s in the United States fell while they quadrupled worldwide during the last decade.<sup>78</sup>

The outbreak of measles has affected the Latino community disproportionately. For example, in Los Angeles County, where residents face a risk more than five times greater than the nation as a whole, measles cases have been reported continually since August 1987. In Jersey City, New Jersey, 100 cases were reported in 1986; one of three was an infant or toddler. Again, most cases affected Latino residents.<sup>79</sup> Other cities with high Hispanic populations have also experienced large outbreaks: New York City -- where 70% of the cases occurred among Black and Hispanic children;<sup>80</sup> Dallas, Houston, San Diego, and Chicago. In Washington, Hispanic children accounted for 45% of measles cases in 1990.<sup>81</sup>

In 1990, the incidence rate was highest for Hispanics, 29.5 cases per 100,000 population, compared to 12.3 for Blacks and 5.2 for Whites.<sup>82</sup>

### Top 10 Causes of Death in 1988: Hispanic and White non-Hispanic

#### HISPANIC

Death from all causes,  
for all ages: 54,713

| % of<br>deaths | Cause                       | Number |
|----------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| 25%            | Heart Disease               | 13,685 |
| 16%            | Cancer                      | 8,960  |
| 10%            | Accidents                   | 5,353  |
| 5%             | Stroke                      | 2,822  |
| 5%             | Homicide                    | 2,511  |
| 4%             | AIDS                        | 1,882  |
| 3%             | Liver Disease and Cirrhosis | 1,847  |
| 3%             | Pneumonia and flu           | 1,763  |
| 3%             | Diabetes                    | 1,584  |
| 3%             | Perinatal Conditions        | 1,391  |
| 23%            | All Others                  | 12,915 |

#### WHITE

Death from all causes,  
for all ages: 1,009,325

| % of<br>deaths | Cause                       | Number  |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| 36%            | Heart Disease               | 366,809 |
| 23%            | Cancer                      | 230,333 |
| 7%             | Strokes                     | 70,939  |
| 4%             | Chronic Lung Disease        | 43,395  |
| 4%             | Accidents                   | 40,949  |
| 4%             | Pneumonia and Flu           | 38,713  |
| 2%             | Diabetes                    | 17,314  |
| 2%             | Suicide                     | 14,896  |
| 1%             | Liver Disease and Cirrhosis | 11,441  |
| 1%             | Atherosclerosis             | 11,369  |
| 16%            | All Others                  | 163,167 |

SOURCE: The Washington Post, Jan. 15, 1991. National Center for Health Statistics

## Recommendations

### Federal, State and local policymakers should:

- Encourage prevention of illness -- thus moving away from the current trend of aggressive cure of illness.
- Develop and support policies which assure access, funding and attention to all areas of health care, including but not limited to prevention and intervention around issues such as breast and cervical cancer, prenatal care, family planning, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, alcohol and substance abuse and mental health.
- Data must be collected and aggregated by race, ethnicity, subgroup, and gender on a national level for all Hispanics on health care status and attitudes on health issue.
- Medicaid, and its child health component, the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program, should be involved in tracking children in need of immunizations and providing adequate reimbursement for the service.
- Support research to understand the soci-cultural barriers that prevent women from adopting "safer sex" practices.
- Encourage expanded contraceptive research -- especially development of non-hormonal methods -- so that sterilization is no longer the number one form of birth control in the United States.
- Examine the barriers to health care that women and their families face so that appropriate mechanisms for service delivery are created and utilized.

- Study health service delivery in other cultures -- are patients healthier when care is delivered in the home or in a community center rather than in a hospital setting?
- Include a significant Hispanic representation in all areas of policy making related to health and human services, including all internal review groups.
- Establish accountability for state block grants as they impact upon Hispanic populations. Data collection mechanisms should provide us with databases needed to formulate effective federal policy.
- Provide greater opportunities for control of measles outbreaks by having children immunized on a walk-in basis, vaccinating eligible children in emergency rooms, and mounting citywide multimedia "stop measles" education and information campaigns. Campaigns should be in Spanish and English and in a range of media vehicles. Washington publicized its program by driving sound trucks through areas with high proportions of Hispanic residents.
- Federal funding for AIDS prevention programs and research should be increased.

**State, local and health organizational efforts should aim to:**

- Encourage prevention of illness -- thus moving away from the current trend of aggressive cure of illness

- Increase training and education so that health care professionals may implement approaches which are bilingual and culturally aware and specific to the health needs of the diverse Hispanic population.
- Increase education to Hispanics on health care issues, specifically issues most common to Hispanics (i.e. diabetes, breast cancer, cervical cancer) with emphasis on increasing culturally sensitive programs and materials.
- Encourage the recruitment and retention of students of color in medical schools.
- Tailor AIDS prevention education programs to subgroups with sensitivity to cultural and language differences.
- Encourage health service providers to inquire about a patient's health when they come in for other services. Specifically, the immunization status of children should be assessed and immunizations offered.
- Provide sex education in schools -- sexually active teens who do not use birth control are less likely to have had a sex education course in school. Most parents (98%) feel they need help in discussing sex with their children and many people (80%) approve of sex education in public schools.

# HISPANAS AND POLITICS



If Hispanic women are to achieve economic equity, they will have to become increasingly skilled in working through the political systems of our nation. For there is hardly an issue that relates to achieving that goal that does not have its roots in one governmental setting or another.

And that means that their political involvement as voters, lobbyists and participants in the policy-making arena and as political officeholders at all decision-making levels of government is an absolute must.

Since the '80s Hispanic women have been demonstrating that they've gotten that message. The proof? The first Hispana to the U.S. Congress, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), was elected in 1989. In 1990, two other Latinas -- California's Anita Pérez Ferguson and New Mexico's Rebecca Vigil Giron, both Democrats -- won primaries to the U.S. Congress but lost in their general election contests. An earlier run had been made by Polly Baca Barragan who in 1979 made a bid for a congressional seat from Colorado.

Among those seeking congressional seats in 1992 are Californians Pérez Ferguson (D), 23rd District, and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D), 33rd District; Sylvia García (D), 29th District, Texas; Nydia Velázquez (D), 12th District, New York and Hildegarde Rodríguez-Schieman (D), 4th District, Illinois. Ros-Lehtinen (R) 18th District, Florida, is seeking re-election.

## Major Breakthroughs

Significant political breakthroughs have been made in California where Gloria Molina became the first Latina in over 100 years to serve on the Los Angeles County

Commission. In Texas, Lena Guerrero became chair of the Texas Railroad Commission, a powerful position in that state that regulates the oil and gas industry. Miriam Santos is Chicago's treasurer and a recognized political comer. And across the country, Latinas are running for all kinds of public offices.

Latinas, according to the Census Bureau, register and vote more than their male counterparts. In 1990, for example, slightly more than 53% of Latinas were registered and about 35% voted. In comparison, 50.5% of Latinos were registered and almost 33% voted.

Between 1980 and 1988, Hispanics went from 2.6% of the national electorate to 3.6%, an increase of 38 percent, according to the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed officials (NALEO).<sup>1</sup> Predictions indicate that voting share could grow to 4.5% in the 1992 presidential election. Between 1980 and 1990, Hispanics increased their voter participation by 54%. By the end of the decade, says NALEO, one out of 22 eligible voters in the country will be Latino.<sup>2</sup>

## Latino Vote in Key States

Moreover, that share is in nine key electoral states crucial to presidential elections -- Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York and Texas. Together, these states represent 202 electoral votes. It takes 270 to elect a president.

While the Hispanic population is growing, those numbers won't automatically translate into political

potency. Among Latino adults, for example, it's important to note that 38% are noncitizens -- and ineligible to vote. That's 5.1 million potential votes. Another 35% are under 18 and ineligible to vote. Of those eligible, less than half actually voted in 1988 but 56% of Latinos had actually registered to vote.<sup>3</sup>

Recent research indicates that Hispanic immigrants register to vote at a much higher rate than most Americans. A telephone survey of 1,635 immigrants from 17 nations conducted by NALEO in 1989 found that 81% of naturalized citizens were registered to vote, compared to 70% of the general U.S. voting-age population.<sup>4</sup>

Of particular note, 49% of those polled said they had "no preference" between the major U.S. political parties -- essentially putting them up for grabs.<sup>5</sup>

Many of those responding said that an important reason for becoming a U.S. citizen was the right to vote. The survey was conducted in California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Arizona and Maryland. Nearly half those interviewed were from Mexico and a fourth were Cuban. Others came from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, El Salvador and Ecuador. Close to three million Hispanics will become eligible for citizenship in the mid-nineties as a result of the amnesty provision of the landmark 1986 immigration law. In California alone, that's almost 1.5 million people.

But as history proves those numbers won't mean anything politically unless they translate to registered and active voters.

## Hispanic Elected Officials

In 1991, NALEO reported that there were 4,202 Hispanic elected officials. Of those, 77.6% (3,261) were male and 22.4% (914) were female.<sup>6</sup>

Of the Latinas, one was a member of the House; two held state offices; three were state senators; 12 were state representatives.

The highest number of Latinas (460) were on school boards across the country. That is not an unusual political beginning for many aspirants to higher office. The next highest number of those elected were municipal leaders (256). There also were 118 county officials, 68 in judicial/law posts and 21 as special district officials.<sup>7</sup>

Not surprisingly, the states with the most Latina elected officials were Texas (361); California (163); and New Mexico (135) where there are large concentrations of Hispanics. Other states with sizeable numbers of Latina elected officials were Arizona (74); Colorado (45); Florida (14); and New York (29).<sup>8</sup>

When Hispanic female and male elected officials are combined, this is where they are:

- There are no U.S. Senators, but there are 11 serving in the House of Representatives -- 0.26 percent of that body.
- There have been male Hispanic governors in the past, but there are none at the present. Florida was the most recent example, though Arizona and New Mexico have had Hispanic governors, too.
- Hispanic elected officials can be found as state officials (9); in state legislatures (131); in county government (378); municipalities (1,314); in judicial/law enforcement roles (596); on education school boards (1,588) and as leaders in special districts (175).<sup>9</sup>

Those officials likewise are found in states where there are high concentrations of Hispanics -- Arizona, California, Illinois, New Mexico and Texas. But today one is apt to find Hispanic elected officials in many states not known as bastions of Latino numbers -- states like Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana,

Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Wisconsin and Wyoming among them.<sup>10</sup>

There are also numerous Latinas/Latinos appointees to public office at all levels of government.

## Latina Numbers Growing

While those are impressive facts and statistics, there is an even more significant message being delivered to Hispanics and the rest of the nation's electorate. There are plenty of Latinas out there willing and able to serve at all governmental levels and they'll be just as comfortable in city, county and state government as well as the the House and the Senate of the United States.

In 1992, some trends were beginning to emerge that highlight even more progress in the political arena. In states like California and New York, Latinas were meeting to talk about key issues like candidate development and the financing of campaigns and holding training conferences on how to run successful political campaigns. There is talk of organizing political action committees, keyed to electing Hispanas.<sup>11</sup>

In organizations like MANA, there is an ongoing effort to make Latinas conscious of the importance of supporting and contributing to political candidates.

Spurring all of this activity are recent victories of Latinas to key political positions across the country. Just how rapidly this is occurring is demonstrated in NALEO figures that show the election of Latinas to public office in just a seven-year period.

### Latina Elected Officials

| 1984 | 1987 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 376  | 592  | 744  | 792  | 941  |

(Source: NALEO)

The expectations are now there for Latinas to run for and hold public office. Increasingly, Latinas are finding a comfort level with politics that is bound to break all kinds of records in the future.

There is a threat to Latino political power in the congressional and state legislative redistricting occurring throughout the country. The Latino vote can be effectively diluted by "cracking," splitting potential Latino voters among many districts, or by "stacking," packing all the Latino voters into a single district where they can elect multiple numbers of officials.<sup>12</sup>

Latinos have relied on federal courts and the Voting Rights Act to reverse discriminatory electoral boundaries, says NALEO. But these efforts haven't fully eliminated voter intimidation completely as 1988 cases in Texas and Orange County, California, indicate.

In those cases, Republican Party chapters launched security measures to prevent non-citizens from voting. Latino voters who showed at the polls were indiscriminately threatened with criminal prosecution for voting illegally. The Texas efforts were halted before election day, but in California there were actually guards at the polling sites.<sup>13</sup>

By some estimates, the number of Latinos who could be elected to local, state and other offices in the nineties could more than double.

They're bound to include a lot more Latinas. And experience shows they'll be supported by other Latinas -- and Latinos.<sup>14</sup>

## Recommendations

### MANA calls on:

- Congress to extend the Voting Rights Act and expand its language provisions.
- Presidential candidates to actively support the extension of the law, the expansion of its language provisions, lobby Congress for its passage, and sign the bill upon passage.
- Congress to pass legislation such as the Universal Voting Law to reform and facilitate voter registration to encourage all eligible citizens to exercise their right of franchise.
- All political parties to aggressively reach out to the Hispanic population to provide mentors to encourage increased participation in this country's political processes.
- All social and political organizations to support registration and "get out the vote" campaigns within the Hispanic community.
- On all educational institutions and organizations and all social service, civic and political organizations to provide educational opportunities that promote citizen participation in the political processes of this nation, especially among first generation Americans and recent arrivals to the U.S. This education should include information on an individual's civic responsibilities, voting rights, voter registration, and the country's political processes.
- The large number of undocumented Latinos must be educated for naturalization to achieve full rights as voting citizens.
- Hispanics must become larger contributors to Latina/Latino political candidates and the number who give must be expanded.
- Monitoring of the redistricting process is critical to ensure that lines are not unfairly and unfavorably drawn. Where there are inequities, Latinas should support efforts to challenge redistricting cases in the courts.
- Education of Latinas on how the political system operates and the importance of voting is a must and must be carried out both in formal and informal settings, starting prior to the legal age to vote and continuing into the adult years.
- No level of public governance should be ignored as prospective Latina election targets -- from municipal posts to the U.S. Congress and presidency.
- The number of Latina/Latino elected officials should be increased to reflect the percentage of their population at the city, state and federal level.
- While the realization of increased numbers of effective elected Latino officials is important, Hispanics should not ignore the numerous appointive positions at all levels of government in the U.S. and push for Latina appointments as aggressively as it pursues appointment of Latinos.

### Challenges for the Latino community:

- The number of Latinas and Latinos who are registered and vote must be increased.
- Voter education on all issues of special interest to Hispanics should be carried out on an ongoing basis by Latino organizations.

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#### Single Parents

|           | 1980        | 1990        |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Hispanics | 570,000     | 1.1 million |
| Whites    | 4.7 million | 6.4 million |
| Blacks    | 2.1 million | 3.1 million |

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